



BRANCHE	SECTION(S)	ÉPREUVE ÉCRITE
Anglais	B, C, D, E, F, G	Durée de l'épreuve : 150 minutes Date de l'épreuve : 18/05/2021 Numéro du candidat : _____

I. Task 1 – Reading comprehension (10 marks)

How to Raise Optimistic Kids in Pessimistic Times¹

Wanted: Optimists. Must enjoy challenges, appreciate possibilities and possess a deep belief in your ability to master a situation. Hope for the future a must, and confidence in that hope a strong plus. If your motto is “try, try again” and your glass is always half-full, you’re perfectly set to make the most of this — or any — opportunity.

5 There are excellent reasons for anyone — nations, businesses, schools — to seek out the optimistic. And it’s even truer for parents who wish to see their children succeed both as kids and as adults. Optimists are more resilient. **_(a)_** Optimism enables people to continue to strive in the face of difficulty, while pessimism leaves them depressed and resigned to failure — even expecting it.

10 I want that hopeful, optimistic outlook for my children. I think most of us do. But when it seems like everything from our headlines to our entertainment options suggests a dystopic society **careening** towards catastrophe, I’m finding it tough to set a positive example — even as I think it’s more important than ever.

15 We live in especially pessimistic times. We’re pessimistic about the environment, pessimistic about the government and pessimistic about education. The resulting stew of negativity makes me worry that the future — my kids’ future — will be even more grim than the present. Pessimism, here I come — and yet, how can I expect my kids to practice what I don’t preach?

Fortunately, research suggests things we can do to help our children grow up with the resilient “can-do” attitude that’s the mark of the optimist — and maintain a happier outlook ourselves.

20 There’s one problem with the pessimist’s perspective: it’s wrong. That negative dystopian soup is an illusion, the result of an unfortunate collision between a 24/7 news cycle and the brain’s tendency to **hone in on** any possible danger and ignore everything else. **_(b)_** No country in the world has a lower life expectancy now than the countries with the highest life expectancies in 1800. More people around the world believe in gender equality than ever before, and more value religious freedom. Poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy, child labor and infant mortality are all on the decline.

25 **_(c)_** We focus on the beasts that are still out there in the deep rather than on those we have tamed because that’s what we’re designed to do. As neuropsychologist Rick Hanson described in his 2013 book *Hardwiring Happiness*, our brains naturally put greater emphasis on the negative. “Just a handful of painful experiences of futility can rapidly become a sense of helplessness,” he writes, while “most good news has little or no effect on lasting memory systems in the brain.”

¹ adapted from <https://time.com/5370788/raising-optimistic-kids-pessimistic-times/> by KJ Dell’Antonia, 21 August 2018

30 In other words, it's natural to let the bad news overwhelm us. Fortunately, with practice, we can help our brains to give the good stuff equal weight. Dr. Hanson's advice: when you hear a great story, achieve something in your own life or just find yourself in a beautiful place with those you love, deliberately rest your mind on that experience and stay with it. Sink into that feeling, he writes, "as it sinks into you." Encourage your kids to **dwell on** their joys and pleasures as well.

35 Optimism can be developed. Researchers found that when even people with a more pessimistic outlook use positive language to describe situations they find traumatic, their feelings about the situation become more positive, and their more generalized sense of optimism increases. That's something we can try at home.

40 Stuck for some ways to approach depressing current events with a more hopeful tone? Consider this: what we call "hate speech" today was just "speech" not very long ago. Bad behavior by corporations was rewarded with higher profits; hunting animals to extinction was sport; dumping pollutants into rivers was an efficient way to get rid of a mess. The events that are driving the news may be bad, but listen to all these people trying to do something about them. That's a change for the better.

45 On any given day, ugly things have been said and done, violence has ended lives and, somewhere, justice has not been served — and in our 24/7 media cycle, there are vast forces aligned to ensure that we don't miss a minute of it. When Paris was attacked in 2015, I couldn't hold back my gasp when my phone started to ping. With events still **unfolding** , it was hard to reassure my kids that it was all "a long way away" when the chance that it could come closer was at the top of my mind.

50 Those moments, however short, of fear and anxiety were pointless. It didn't serve anyone for me to ignore my family to click and refresh to learn more. **_(d)_** I've found that it's difficult for our children to feel secure when they see us reacting constantly to outside events that are often invisible to them. That's why I turned my news notifications off, and I've never brought them back.

(e) That might mean volunteering, but it might also mean simply joining and being part of local institutions and clubs that feed our natural human need for connection (not of the digital kind). Find something in your area that makes you feel hopeful, and make it a part of your family life.

55 Raising optimistic kids is hard, in part, because it demands that parents relinquish the cynical perspective that's the easiest response to pessimistic times. It's tempting to dismiss the challenges that bombard us daily with a hopeless shrug. It's even reasonable. I don't know what we can do to make any of that better.

But I do know that we need to find ways to try — and that means answering the "optimists wanted" call, and raising children to do the same. Hopeful, resilient problem solvers needed. No application necessary. Just show up, and make the best of it.

(970 words)

READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS**I. Insert sentences into the text (-1 per wrong or missing answer)**

Choose which sentences (1-7) best fit into the gaps (a-e) in the text. Write the correct numbers into the box below. There are two sentences which you do not need to use.

1. Humanity has made enormous progress by almost every measure, but that progress has become the water in which we swim, and like fish, we take the water for granted.
2. Passionately following the “big scary” news can not only leave us feeling distraught, it can distract us from the smaller issues where knowing the facts, and then acting, voting or volunteering as a result might make a difference.
3. Our pessimism, ironically enough, derives in large part from our collective expectation that we can do better.
4. I may need and want to know what’s going on in the world, but news delivered in that manner evokes fear rather than informs — including for our kids.
5. Overall, things on planet Earth are pretty good — or at least, in many ways, they’ve never been better.
6. They make better entrepreneurs, experience better health outcomes, live longer and are more satisfied with their relationships.
7. However, the recommendation is to pay more attention to the positive, to change how we explain current events and to moderate our news intake.

Write your answers here:

Gap in text:	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
Sentence:					

II. Vocabulary (-1 per wrong or missing answer)

Circle the best option – a, b or c. There is only ONE correct answer per example.

1. In line 10, “careening” is closest in meaning to:
 - a. creeping
 - b. rushing
 - c. tending
2. In line 19, “hone in on” is closest in meaning to:
 - a. face up to
 - b. shy away from
 - c. focus on
3. In line 33, “dwell on” is closest in meaning to:
 - a. keep thinking about
 - b. look forward to
 - c. be keen on
4. In line 45, “unfolding” is closest in meaning to:
 - a. being investigated
 - b. unresolved
 - c. developing

III. True / False / Not Stated (-1 per wrong or missing answer)

Decide if the statements are True (T), False (F) or Not Stated (NS) in the text. For each statement, circle T, F or NS.

1.	The writer believes that optimists are people who succeed in avoiding tough situations and challenging issues.	T	F	NS
2.	Scientific evidence suggests that optimism and pessimism are mental states that can be influenced.	T	F	NS
3.	According to neuropsychologist Rick Hanson, positive information is less likely to be stored in our long-term memory than negative news.	T	F	NS
4.	Research shows that the way we communicate experiences has an impact on how we handle them.	T	F	NS
5.	Because of relentless reporting from news organizations, misdemeanours such as hunting endangered species are now on the decline.	T	F	NS
6.	According to the writer, cynicism is an unorthodox tool that can be used to encourage a positive mindset in children.	T	F	NS

II. Task 2 – Reading into writing (20 marks)

*You are going to read two texts in which the authors tackle the issue of **the impact of video games on our health and well-being**.*

Don't Feel Bad If Your Kids Are Gaming More Than Ever. In Fact, Why Not Join Them?²

Over the past month or so, while quarantined at home, my son and I have turned to video games as a welcome distraction. We're not alone. Sequestered people around the globe are playing more video games during the pandemic. Gaming was up 75% in the first week of mass self-isolation alone, Verizon says.

Rather than rue this pandemic-driven video game and screen time boom, research suggests we should be cheering it. Research shows that video games can provide important benefits. We need to shed the stereotypical image of gamers as isolated loners playing for hours on end in a dank basement. Today, kids and adults can socialize with one another, in groups large and small, while playing games online. During the pandemic, connectivity stands out. "It's all about the social interaction," says Isabela Granic, professor of developmental psychopathology at Radboud University, in the Netherlands. "You build your own gardens with other people. You play in teams overcoming other teams and militias and whatever it is. And it's really checking a lot of those social needs in this time of isolation."

Gaming can help players develop a range of skills, experts say. "People learn how to negotiate, to collaborate, to take turns, to think critically with others, and so on," says Granic. "Motivationally, people learn how to persevere in the face of failure. To take failure over and over and still work at some kind of goal. Game designers, for a long time, have been these sorts of wizards of engagement. And they figured out how to keep us at that sweet spot of learning. They're still better at it than most teachers are."

² adapted from <https://time.com/5825214/video-games-screen-time-parenting-coronavirus/> by Sean Gregory, 22 April 2020

There's evidence that video games can help with mental health, too. "When you're battling with traumatic thoughts, you can lose yourself in a game," says Michelle Colder Carras, a public health researcher at Johns Hopkins. Granic agrees. "Kids are as anxious as parents right now with this epidemic," she says. "There's lots of them worried about their health, about their parents' health. The formula for anxiety is unpredictability, having no control, and a potential threat out there where you have no agency yourself to do anything about it. And what are games really, really good at? Giving you control, giving you predictability, and having potential threats overcome by things you can do, things you have agency over."

Research shows that video games can be good for your brain in other ways, too. German researchers, for example, have found that adults who played *Super Mario 64* for 30 minutes a day for two months had increased grey matter — where the cell bodies of the brain's nerve cells are situated — in the right hippocampus, right prefrontal cortex and the cerebellum, regions involved in functions like spatial navigation, memory formation, strategic planning and fine motor skills.

The benefits of playing video games are numerous when you start to actually look at the research.

(483 words)

The health effects of too much gaming³

It is estimated that 164 million Americans play video games, also known as gaming. Contrary to popular belief, it isn't just teens who play games. According to a recent survey, only 21% of gamers were under 18 years old. While gaming can be a fun distraction or hobby (and is even becoming a competitive sport on many college campuses), there are health risks that come from too much gaming. What are these harms, and what can be done about them?

Gamers are at risk of repetitive stress injuries, or overuse injuries, which come from activities that involve repeated use of muscles and tendons, to the point that pain and inflammation develop. Overuse injuries of the hands and arms are rampant among gamers. For example, many develop carpal tunnel syndrome, an inflammation of a nerve in the wrist, which causes pain and numbness.

Gaming is also associated with obesity. This is due to the obvious phenomenon that if a gamer is sitting in front of a screen for hours every day, he or she isn't getting much exercise. The obesity is also thought to be due to increased food intake while playing video games. According to a study in the *Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, "a single session of video game play is associated with an increased food intake, regardless of appetite sensations." The proposed mechanisms are that either the signals that indicate satiety (fullness) get impaired, or that the mental stress involved with playing video games activates the reward centers, which leads to increased food intake.

Vision problems are common complaints of gamers. The most common vision problem is eye strain, which can lead to headaches and poor concentration. Gaming has been reported to result in seizures, leading to warnings on the packaging.

Gaming has also been associated with psychological problems. According to one study from the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, between 0.3% and 1.0% of Americans might have an internet gaming disorder. Video game addiction, or internet gaming disorder is defined as experiencing several of the following symptoms over a 12-month period: gaming preoccupation; loss of interest in other activities; loss of relationship,

³ adapted from <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/the-health-effects-of-too-much-gaming-2020122221645> by Peter Grinspoon, MD, 22 December 2020

educational, or career opportunities; gaming to escape or relieve anxiety; guilt, or other negative mood states; failure to control gaming or continued gaming despite psychosocial problems.

Gaming has also been associated with sleep deprivation, insomnia, depression, aggression, and anxiety. There has also been concern that exposure to the extreme violence that is commonly found in video games can desensitize teens and adults to such violence, causing emotional problems and even leading to young people committing acts of violence.

However, as with many other activities, moderation is the key when playing video games. Most of the harms that come from gaming can be improved, if not avoided altogether, by limiting the number of hours spent in front of the screen, and by engaging in healthy activities like exercising, or socializing in the real world instead of the virtual game world.

(492 words)

Writing task

Write a structured **analysis** of **200-250 words** in which you do the following:

- Compare and contrast the overall points of view expressed in the two texts (referring to 2-3 main arguments put forward in each text).
Your analysis must represent $\pm 2/3$ of your answer, i.e. $\pm 140-170$ words.
- Explain which point of view you agree with more, and why. If you agree with both or neither, explain why.
Your personal opinion must represent $\pm 1/3$ of your answer, i.e. 60-80 words.

Use your **own words** as far as possible. Do not copy from the texts, except for short quotes (with quotation marks) to support your statements.

III. Task 3 – Essay writing (30 marks)

Write a well-structured essay of between 300 and 400 words on **ONE** of the topics below. Indicate your choice of topic clearly and include the word count.

1. *Smartphones are more than gadgets to teenagers, they're life-support systems.*
To what extent do you agree or disagree?
2. *We all bear a responsibility – individually and collectively – for human rights abuses worldwide.*
To what extent do you agree or disagree?
3. *Today's environmental crisis is an opportunity to look at what is possible for a sustainable future.*
According to you, what are the major environmental problems and how can they be solved?